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LETTER DATED 21 SEPTEMBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SUDAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of the interview by the World Socialist Web Site with Mr. Tom Carnaffin, the British Technical Manager at the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory in the Sudan, which had been destroyed by the United States of America under the pretext that the factory was making chemical weapons or their precursors (see annex).

The British engineer confirmed again that Al-Shifa factory was not making chemical weapons or their so-called precursors. He confirmed that it produced basic medicines for human consumption and for veterinary use.

The British engineer refuted United States allegations that the factory was a highly guarded establishment. He said that within the factory there were no security doors, there weren't any "no-go" areas. It was just a small factory and what the Americans said - that it was a rambling factory - is rubbish.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Elfatih ERWA
Permanent Representative

Annex

Interview with Tom Carnaffin, technical manager at the bombed Al-Shifa

[Latest News From Sudan At Sudan Net]

News Article by WSWS on September 19, 1998 at 17:50:20:

Tom Carnaffin

Interview with Tom Carnaffin, technical manager at the bombed Al-Shifa Pharmaceutical Factory in Sudan

By Barbara Slaughter
World Socialist Web Site
12 September 1998

"The Al-Shifa factory was not making chemical weapons or their so-called 'precursors'"

The US missile attack that destroyed the Al-Shifa Pharmaceutical Factory in Khartoum was a brutal act of war. The claims by Clinton and the US administration that the factory was making a chemical component of nerve gas have largely been discredited.

The factory was Sudan's largest commercial manufacturer of prescription drugs for both medical and veterinary purposes, producing 50 percent of the country's supply. The consequences of its destruction, on the lives and health of the Sudanese people, will be immense. One man who has an intimate knowledge of the factory and of the Baaboud family who built it is Tom Carnaffin. A 57-year-old engineer who has worked all over the world building and commissioning industrial plants, Carnaffin has worked as technical manager for the Baaboud family since 1991.

In an exclusive interview with Barbara Slaughter, Carnaffin nails the lies of the Clinton government and provides a stark insight into the impact the factory's destruction will have on the lives of the Sudanese people.

Q: Can you explain about the owners of the factory and how you came to work for them?

I work for the Baaboud family. They came from Yemen to the Sudan, long before the British withdrew in 1956 and set up trading. Only one member of the family went to Saudi Arabia a long time ago and got Saudi nationality. The majority of the family stayed in the Sudan and still have Sudanese nationality.

They run ships, plying the Red Sea. They have a salt farm and have just started installing a refining plant. One of the big problems on that coast, in the Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia, is goitre. So they have to process the salt by adding iodine, which eliminates the condition. We are also in the middle of a project for processing sesame seed. It's a big family, with seven brothers who do everything together. There's nothing like one faction of the family running off and doing something else, like making bombs.

They built the Al-Shifa medicine factory in conjunction with a man called Bashir Hassan Bashir, who is loosely connected with the family through marriage. They came up with this project for the medicine factory in about 1992-93. The Baaboud family put millions of dollars into it. They not only manufactured medicine, but examined what was necessary in the field and sending dispensers out to make sure that little Abdulla actually took one tablet a day over six days instead of six tablets on the first day and nothing afterwards. It was a fairly comprehensive operation.

I originally went out to Saudi Arabia, in January 1991, and became the technical manager for the Baabouds. I was involved in many different aspects from work on the ships, to the salt farm, to the cleaning plant, to the medicine factory and was pretty au-fait with all they were doing. They are a very good family and are highly noted for this in both the Sudan and Saudi Arabia. They do a lot of work for underprivileged people--for instance they provide homes for students going to college in Khartoum and Port Sudan. You couldn't say they were fundamentalists.

Q: What were your responsibilities at the factory?

My role was to make a technical appraisal of what was happening. Whenever any problems occurred regarding fire systems, furniture, computers or dust coming in under the doors, and all kinds of other things, they would say, "Send for Tom--get him to come and sort this out." So I was very familiar with what was going on in the factory--where they made the tea, where they went to the toilet, who the guard was on the gate.

It was a very prestigious place. Hundreds of people used to visit, including the British ambassador. Any visitors to the country were taken to the medicine factory. They were very proud of it. There was nothing untoward that they didn't want them to see.

After the bombing the press said this was a highly guarded establishment. The level of guard was the same as at any Sudanese establishment, whether it was a water pumping station or a soap factory. Yes, there would be a man on the gate with an automatic rifle, but you've got to remember that people from the south have assassinated members of the government. There are insurgents coming over from Ethiopia on a regular basis. They highjack lorries on the main Khartoum to Port Sudan road. So they have to take care.

Within the factory there were no security doors, there weren't any "no-go" areas. It was just a small factory. This thing that the Americans say that it was a rambling factory is rubbish. The whole place was only about 60 metres square. There were just over 200 people working there. All the machinery came from Europe and America.

The Al-Shifa factory was not making chemical weapons or their so-called "precursors". It produced basic medicines for human consumption and for veterinary use. Probably the most important was an anti-diarrhoea remedy. They also made drugs against TB and they bought in the basic stock for antibiotics. Someone like Glaxo produces basic antibiotics in tons. It is then cut and blended and put into medicines and capsules. That's what they were doing. There was no prime chemical manufacture. They didn't have reactors or anything like that. It was a mixing and blending facility, like a big chemist's shop

Q: Did you know Henry Jobe, the American expert who designed the factory?

I never met him. I knew of him and I think I saw him a couple of times. But didn't actually meet him in Bashir's office. His responsibility was just for the initial stages. After that the pharmacists took it over.

Q: Could you explain why the factory was sold and to whom?

It came to a point at the end of last year when the Baabouds decided they would like to liquidate their share in the factory, which was quite extensive. All the options were looked at. Would Bashir buy it outright or would they sell it? There was a promotional video made. This is what shoots down the American claims completely. Firstly the Baabouds asked the government if they would take it over. Then they put that factory on the open market. It was a number of months before Adris came up as a buyer.

If somebody was doing something subversive in an establishment, how could they put it on the open market and have prospective buyers, from

god knows where, coming and having a look at it?

Q: The US government has claimed they have soil specimens one mile from the factory containing material that proves it was producing nerve gas. What do you think of this?

The whole thing is a lie. How could they get an effluent outfall, one mile from a factory that doesn't have an effluent discharge of any kind, by fume emission or water emission or anything like that? The only emission from the factory is from the toilets. How can you get a radical chemical from that?

It's now been revealed US forces flew a reconnaissance mission to test for traces of gas and reported that there were none. Clinton still authorised the attack. He was also told that the absence of gas would avoid chemical fallout and the horrifying spectacle of civilian casualties. That's rubbish. The fallout is the fact that the kids in Al Foa and Hawata are dying because they can't get medicine. The morality of the thing is even worse than any fallout from toxic effluent. You are talking about thousands of people dying from dysentery and other diseases. The medicines just won't be available.

Q: Could you tell me something about the Sudan? What are its main natural resources?

The Sudan is a vast country with vast resources. The principal ones they are using at the moment are all renewable--cotton, corn, peanuts, sugar. You have to remember that Nimeiri raped the country and its resources. This was a man that the British and the Americans said was a god in his own country. He took over all kinds of factories, cotton mills, oil plants, and so forth, but he couldn't run them and they closed down. There's a soap factory that's standing empty in Port Sudan that's been closed down since the early 1970s. Nimeiri went power mad. He would take a plane and fly to Paris for an evening meal. He was removed by a countercoup.

There are also vast mineral resources. They have a gold mine run by the French. In certain parts of the Red Sea plain you can pick gold up off the ground. They have chrome, copper and obviously they have got the Nile, which is a massive natural resource. The British way back in the 1920s carried out the Geezara irrigation scheme between the White and the Blue Nile, which is a vast grass growing area. We have a massive excavator down there. It can dig to 40 feet in one go. In areas where we were trying it out there was 40 feet of black topsoil.

Q: What role does Britain play today in the country's economic and political life?

During Kitchener's time there were a lot of people killed, but there have been just as bloody times both before and after. Britain has all kinds of historical connections with the Sudan. We did the Geezara irrigation

scheme; we built dams and all sorts. The Sudanese up to now nad high regard for Britain. In the Second World War, up to the Battle of El Alamein, all the armaments went through the Sudan from the south. The Sudanese were some of the best fighters the British had in North Africa. There were colonials that lived, worked and died in the country, who have memorials built by the Sudanese out of respect.

Tony Blair has in one sentence, without any thought, destroyed a century of high regard. It's shot, because of this unquestioned support by Tony Blair for a guy that was caught with his trousers down and has been shown to be lying. He is also lying about the medicine factory. There's this guy sitting in the White House, who has never been to the Sudan. He goes to all these glory holes like Northern Ireland and so forth, not for the benefit of the world, but because it's good for him politically.

There is considerable trade between Britain and Germany and the Sudan. And potentially the Sudan is a huge market. The amount of British equipment out there is vast. Nearly all the extraction equipment for vegetable oil has been built in Britain and most of the dragline excavators. Now the cheap prices from the Toyotas and so forth are pushing the British out, but they still preferred Lister's and Perkin's diesel engines. During the past week I've been travelling round Britain with two of the brothers buying generators and so forth.

That's what annoys me so much about Blair. He's the one that put his hand on Clinton's shoulder and said, "This man could never do anything wrong. He is a good man." He was made to look a fool then and he is being made to look a fool now.

Q: What is the attitude of the Baabouds to the Islamic government in Khartoum?

They are supporters of the government. They definitely were not supporters of Nimeiri, because he raped the country. Hassan al-Tourabi is effectively the political mouthpiece of the Muslim League in the Sudan, but the country shouldn't be judged by him.

Nobody has been to the country and seen what the hell is going on. It is going through a bad time. When you think that in 1956 the Sudanese pound was valued higher than the British pound and now the exchange rate is thousands of their pounds to ours. But the economy is beginning to grow. They have got the South Koreans in, who have opened up some of these factories that Nimeiri closed. They have opened up a cotton spinning factory that had been standing empty for years. It's processing the cotton now, which gives the whole thing added value.

Q: Can you say something about the conditions in the Sudan?

It's difficult. There's no money. The country is slowly trying to get itself

together, to earn foreign currency. Nobody will loan them money. There are companies like one from Kuwait that will give loans to Sudanese projects, but it's against next year's crop.

At present they are busy doing the road from Port Sudan to Khartoum, financed by the African Bank. They couldn't make the payments to the bank, so the Italian contractors went away and there is a bloody great gap in the road. The bank and the contractors had no sympathy at all. They just packed their gear and went home.

They have huge health problems. Before I left Baaboud's I was in the Sudan for seven months, through the rainy season. Where there is water the malaria is unbelievable. If you walked out of the house across the road, about 10 or 15 metres, and back again, by the time you got back you'd be covered head to toe in mosquitoes. I nearly died from malaria whilst I was there.

In the village we were in, you went to have the test for malaria in a tin hut. There were so many insects in there; it was like being in a beehive. The hospital didn't have electricity because the power was switched off and part of it was flooded. The doctor was trained in Russia during the Nimeiri regime. He told me that in Russia they had been trained how to operate in a third world country. He said, "That's all very well, but this is a fourth world country." That's what it is now because of the need for medicines and provisions. This is what the people in the Sudan are fighting against.

Another problem is Bilhuxia, which is caused by a parasite from a snail that lives in the canals. The parasite gets into the human body and destroys the liver. The children get it because they bathe in the canals. It's not easily cured.

The government don't admit to the outside world exactly what is going on. It's just the same in places like Saudi Arabia. They had a fire in Mecca at the time of the Hadj two years ago. They said 200 were killed. I know for a fact there were 2,000. That's Saudi Arabia, an ally of the Americans, with the third world's worst record on human rights. There are things that happen in the Sudan that they don't spread around the world. There were two villages while we were there that were surrounded by the army because they had dysentery and they didn't want it to spread.

When I was very ill there in 1992-93 there were no drugs. They were getting out-of-date drugs in from Egypt. Then they started a free market in drugs, so if you had the money you could buy them. But the majority of the population can't afford to buy those drugs, so they were totally dependent the Al-Shifa factory.

Now what will happen to the children who get diarrhoea, or malaria? They will just die--thousands of children will die. I don't know how many. The World Health Organisation will tell you that. I've seen them die myself.

There are no serums or anything like that. There are no facilities to keep serums for snake bites and scorpion bites. So people die.

Q: The US press has claimed a link between the factory and Osama bin Laden. Did you ever hear his name? Was he ever at the factory?

Everybody talks about Osmar bin Laden. It's just a natural thing, like in Britain people might talk about the IRA or Ian Paisley. Yes, he does have a house in the Sudan. But there has never been any connection between the Baabouds and him. In trading terms the Baabouds would never take on a partner or a joint venture. They've done this thing with Hassan Bashir, but that is because effectively he is in the family.

I've put lots of projects to the Baabouds, anything from fast ferries to whatever. The thing that I originally went to Saudi Arabia for was to do a joint venture with a British company. They don't like that sort of thing, because it gives other people access to their situation. They don't like partners and joint ventures. So for Osmar bin Laden to be involved in the factory is just crazy.

I've certainly never seen bin Laden. Salim Baaboud said he had told the police that the first time he had seen the man was when he saw his picture in the paper after the bombing.

I'm not a Saudi promoter, because I know what it's like, having lived and worked there. But the Saudis must be cringing, at this constant referral, even by the Americans, that bin Laden is a Saudi. The family are Saudis, but he has been ostracised by them. He's been exiled by the Saudi government and to even mention his name in Saudi Arabia is against the law. He has no country. He's stateless.

Q: Were there Iraqi customers? Would they visit for commercial reasons? The US media has carried accounts of Saddam Hussein's alleged biological warfare chief visiting the factory.

People from Iraq may well have visited the factory. Iraqi dignitaries certainly visited, but so did the British ambassador. I mean, you take people to prestigious places. Who these people were is not an issue. Because Clinton goes to the Kremlin is he a Russian?

I don't think they did export to Iraq, but I know that enquiries had been made. The factory was looking for customers like any other business. They were looking for hard currency. It was open to anyone. Iranians came to visit.

I have a friend who sold the last very large power station to the Iraqis, which isn't so long ago. And he was given an OBE for it. Then when the war broke out, he went to work one morning and there was no place for his car in the car park and no office for him. It was a different ball game.

So don't talk to me about the fact that we don't speak to the Iraqis. We've all been there. We've all done business there. That's bullshit. The Iraqis have every right to buy medicine, even under the United Nations conditions. They are not necessarily going to buy from the Americans are they?

The American government may have claimed they did not know of any commercial production at the factory, but after the bombing you could see quite clearly on the television what they produced. You could see the bottles of medicine lying about. The press has all the evidence on that. Everybody and their dog was walking round the factory and looking at what was there. The minister wouldn't stand there and watch the fire burn after the bombing if there was something hazardous there, would he? He would know exactly what it was and he'd be miles away.

The Baabouds and Bashir didn't have anything against the Americans. They bought American machinery. We even had American school buses to carry the workers in every day. But anybody in the gulf can see the inequality of approach by the Americans to different countries. You know the Israelis have a chemical warfare plant, but do they question them about it?

Q: Has the US media contacted you?

From day one I knew the American government was wrong. People I have had discussions with on American radio programmes and television programmes know that they are wrong as well. The experts in America know they are wrong. On the Sunday after it happened the CBS had me on, ABS, Pacific National Radio, New York. I had the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times. They all spoke to me and had me on programmes. The general consensus has been that the American were wrong--and that's from the television, radio and press. I've been on Pacific National Radio three times, two discussions and one interview. And they have been pushing it hard. CBS seem to be saying that the government got it wrong and actually they should do something about it. But CNN never spoke to me. The others told me not to expect them, because they were pro-national interest.

Q: Has any government agency from the US or Britain contacted you?

Yes, I've got a meeting with them tomorrow. A police inspector, Inspector Ian Cross, from the local force rang me and said he would like to come and visit me with someone from London. You can report that. I'm very open about this whole thing. I've got nothing to hide or anything like that.

I was on Sky News and the Defence Secretary George Robertson came on after me, and he immediately misquoted two specific things I had said. One was the time I'd been there and the second thing what I'd had actually

been doing.

Robin Cook, British Defence Secretary, said he was confident America would not have chosen these targets without clear evidence that they were the correct targets. He claimed he has seen direct intelligence evidence on the targets, but refused to say what that evidence was. That's an outright lie! That just cannot be so. He is giving them carte blanche and declaring to the world: "We are a satellite of America."

He said that innocent people can not have their lives put at risk by terrorists. So what was American's action other than a terrorist action? They killed 30 people in the bombing raid, but they have put many thousands of people's lives at risk. People are being condemned to death by this action of the American state.

And they continue with the lie. The Sudanese put out the red carpet for them to go and analyse the situation, after the bombing. And it was stopped. The only people who could stop it in the UN were the Americans. They turned it down flat. So now it's going to fester forever. It's very unfair for the Sudanese. Christ, the Americans risked life and limb to go and do investigations in Iraq. The Sudanese said, "Come. We'll give you anything you want. Have a look. Analyse the situation."

There's one last thing I want to say. I don't work for the Sudanese government. I speak simply as an individual. But I will do everything in my power to bring pressure to bear to help force the American government to pay compensation for what they have done. They have more than a moral duty to the people who are suffering as a result of their actions.

The bombing will have more of a social impact than an economic one. It's the human consequences that should be borne in mind. Adris, the new owner, says he will rebuild the factory. I don't know how the insurance will cover this. It is an act of war, an act of aggression, so I don't know how the insurance company will look at it. But it's much more than simply a question of bricks and mortar.

I've lived and worked with the Sudanese in some very arduous conditions. They are people who have nothing and I mean nothing. Yet they are so hospitable. They have fed me and looked after me. And I have an obligation to those people, that is the people in rural Sudan. I know them. I've worked with them. To think these people have been treated like this makes me so angry. What Clinton did was a crime.

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